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TAGS: PREL XL CARICOM
SUBJECT: CARICOM SYG DISCUSSES MINISTERIAL MEETING AGENDA

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 21

1B. 05 NASSAU 2165

Action Request for WHA: See para 12

11. (U) SUMMARY. Ambassador met with CARICOM SYG Carrington January 17 to discuss proposed ministerial between Secretary and CARICOM FonMins. Carrington suggested postponing the meeting until the week of March 27. CARICOM is in general agreement with the five broad agenda topics, but requested further clarification on three of them. END SUMMARY.

Ambassador Meets with CARICOM SYG Carrington

12. (U) Ambassador, DCM, and PolOff met with CARICOM SYG Ambassador Edwin Carrington, A/SYG for Foreign and Community Relations Ambassador Colin Granderson, and CARICOM official Charmaine Atkinson-Jordan on January 17 to discuss preparations for the proposed ministerial with the Secretary.

After January 4 meeting (ref A), Granderson had promised to provide CARICOM FonMins' feedback on the agenda.

CARICOM Requests Greater Detail on Agenda Topics

13. (U) Carrington did not spring any surprises regarding the proposed agenda. However, he did ask for more detail on three of the topics and hinted at the difficulty of preventing the deportees issue from surfacing.

14. (SBU) Democratic Governance. Carrington noted the "deficit" in democratic governance in the Hemisphere and asked for Washington's thoughts on how the Secretary would like to focus this point of the agenda. Carrington suggested helping Haiti consolidate democratic governance after the election as a worthy objective.

15. (SBU) Trade/Economic Competitiveness. CARICOM asked for more information on the trade competitiveness initiative and for a USG point of contact in Washington on this topic for meeting preparation. Carrington noted that CARICOM states would need both technical assistance and opening of trade restrictions on the U.S. side. He described a pessimistic scenario from CARICOM's standpoint where the Caribbean Single Market Economy (CSME) achieves its aims of removing economic barriers and increasing the region's competitiveness only to "hit a brick wall" of U.S. market inaccessibility.

16. (SBU) Related to the trade/economic issue, CARICOM is creating a Regional Development Fund (RDF) and Regional Development Agency (RDA) designed to help the region's less developed and disadvantaged states (OECS, Belize, and Guyana) as well as specific sectors (i.e., Jamaican bananas). The RDF and RDA are meant to fundamentally redesign the Caribbean economy along the European model, not just provide aid. The RDA would house a small team to deliver technical assistance quickly in target areas. Carrington wants to explain this strategy to the Secretary in more detail at the meeting so that the USG will be better positioned to make decisions when CARICOM seeks contributions for the RDF from the donor community. He said that a "modest" RDF would be USD120 million, and an "adequate" one USD250 million.

17. (SBU) Disaster Preparedness. CARICOM foreign ministers broadly support this agenda topic. Granderson said that disaster preparedness is of great importance to them because of its impact on economic development. Specifically, CARICOM mentioned: a) the widespread difficulty of obtaining risk insurance in the region because private insurers are reluctant to write policies in the wake of recent disasters; b) the need for equipment, training, and public education in order to properly institute a tsunami-warning system; and c) the need for enhanced communications capability during disasters.

18. (SBU) Law Enforcement/Security Partnerships. Ambassador said that many regional entities and countries are working independently on the security issue, especially in preparation for World Cup Cricket in 2007. He suggested that centralizing these efforts would maximize the efficacy of security cooperation and the resources that USG can bring to

bear on this initiative. Carrington agreed in principle with this approach and will raise the issue with the CARICOM Crime and Security "czar", former Jamaican police commissioner Francis Forbes.

19. (SBU) Ambassador reiterated his advice that raising the deportees issue with the Secretary under the security rubric would be self-defeating. Nevertheless, Carrington's response indicated how fixated Caribbean leaders remain with this issue. He suggested that the USG might want to change how it assists countries receiving deportees. He said the region perceives the U.S. response to complaints about deportees as "almost brutal". He also mentioned that the U.S. is suffering an image problem on account of the marked increase in light arms now flowing into the region.

10. (U) Energy Policy/Conservation. CARICOM asked whether this energy rubric proposed by USG is the same as the energy initiative discussed at the Summit of the Americas.

New Proposed Meeting Date: Week of March 27

11. (SBU) CARICOM FonMins need more time to prepare for the meeting. They proposed postponing it to the week of March 127. Like the original date of February 23 or 25, this would presumably enable the Secretary to attend the meeting on the way to or from the inaugural of a new Haitian government. The CARICOM FonMins would also like to know the duration of the meeting, for planning purposes.

12. (SBU) Action Request: Post requests that WHA provide further clarification on how the Secretary intends to address the democratic governance, trade competitiveness, and energy policy agenda topics. Post requests a Department point of contact to work with CARICOM on the trade/economic competitiveness topic in advance of the meeting. Lastly, Post requests feedback on the new proposed meeting date and the duration of the meeting.

BULLEN